Hartley Bay family marks 70 years of married life

GUESTS OF HONOR, Mr. and Mrs. Heber Clifton of Hartley Bay are shown entering Community Hall to strains of "Here Comes the Bride". Mr. Clifton wears Coronation Medal issued in honor of Queen Elizabeth. — Staff photos by Dick Ayres

DAUGHTER, Mrs. Ambrose Robinson, left, and son Lewis, right, help Mr. and Mrs. Heber Clifton cut bridal cake at 70th wedding anniversary celebrations.

OCTOGENARIAN GROOM and bride, Mr. and Mrs. Heber Clifton, of Hartley Bay, smile at members of family as they start to file by to offer congratulations on couple's 70th wedding anniversary.

Entire village attends party to honor Heber, Lucy Clifton

By DICK AYRES

Managing Editor of The Daily News

Nearly 70 years ago on September 1, 1891, in the village of Port Simpson, capital of the Tsimpsean Indians, famous Methodist missionary Thomas Crosby united in marriage a young Native couple in a ceremony that was historic only to the principals.

For Heber Clifton, not yet 20, of Hartley Bay and his teen-age bride Lucille Buckston of Klemtu and Kitamaat, it was the beginning of a wonderful and fruitful life together. To the noted missionary it was one of the more important weddings among a people to whom Christianity was still new.

Tuesday, April 4, was a historic occasion to the more than 200 descendents of Heber and Lucy Clifton, who gathered at Hartley Bay, 100 miles south of Prince Rupert, to honor the couple who will have been wed 70 years on September 1.

The anniversary was celebrated prematurely during the Easter holidays as the best time for all members of the Clifton clan to gather at the home village. For the rest of the year they will be busy fishing, working in canneries and will be scattered far from home.

Nearly 150 sons, daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, in-laws and relatives gathered to pay tribute to Hartley Bay's patriarch and matriarch. Only the tiny children stayed home, waving through the windows of the 30 or more houses as everyone else, dressed in their Easter best, made their way to the Community Hall.

NEVER GAYER

The Community Hall never looked gayer. Streamers and balloons decked the ceiling and walls while the tables were centred with artificial flowers. At the far end of the hall, behind the banquet table was a heart-shaped arch of artificial tulips, lilies of the valley and roses, with a card inscribed "Happy Anniversary—1891 to 1961."

Proud and happy Mr. and Mrs. Clifton were escorted into the Community Hall to the strains of "Here Comes the Bride." Mrs. Clifton wore a corsage of carnations, gift from her sons, while Mr. Clifton boasted a white boutonniere and his Coronation Medal, a gift of Queen Elizabeth.

Out of the 150 persons who sat down to the hot, full-course turkey dinner, only 10 of them were whites and two of those were "captives" of the Cliftons.

There was Rev. R. A. Burrows of the mission boat Thomas Crosby IV, who asked grace for the assembly in the Tsimpsean tongue, Mrs. Burrows, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Findlay, "adopted children" of the Clifton clan, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. MacLeod, teachers at the Hartley Bay school, R. H. S. Sampson, superintendent of the Skeena Indian agency, Rev. Dr. R. W. K. Elliott, of First United Church, Prince Rupert, J. R. Ayres, managing editor of The Daily News, and Capt. Earl Benson, pilot of the Pacific Western Airlines "Beaver" in which the Prince Rupert party flew down.

The toast to "the bridal couple" was given by their adopted son J. A. (Jack) Findlay, who spent 10 years of his life, from 1935 to 1945 as a teacher-missionary at Hartley Bay.

Now, superintendent of Alert Bay Indian agency, Mr. Findlay said he was proud to be a member of the Clifton band which he said, now numbered 217, being made up of nine children, 51 grandchildren, 115 great-grandchildren and 30 in-laws.

He wished his adopted father and mother "many good years to come."

HAPPY RECOLLECTIONS

As master-of-ceremonies, son Robert Clifton, now a member of the Comox band near Courtenay, Vancouver Island, recalled many of the incidents he, his brothers and sisters had enjoyed during their childhood at Hartley Bay.

He paid tribute to his parents for their "clean living and Christian way of life" which they had tried to pass on to their children.

He described his parents as strict disciplinarians and recalled the hymn-singing sessions his mother had insisted on for the family.

Mrs. Simon Rees, the Clifton's first grandchild and Charles Robinson, their first grandson, made a joint presentation of a gift of money to Mr. and Mrs. Clifton.

On behalf of W. J. McGregor assistant Indian Commissioner for British Columbia, and also the Skeena Indian agency, superintendent R. H. S. Sampson presented Mr. and Mrs. Clifton with a bouquet of red carnations and gladioli

For Dr. and Mrs. W. S. Kergin, of Prince Rupert, both adopted members of the Clifton clan, J. R. Ayres, managing editor of The Daily News, presented Mr. and Mrs. Clifton with a dozen and a half yellow roses.

Mr. Ayres expressed the regret of Dr. and Mrs. Kergin at being unable to be present "at such a momentous occasion."

HONORARY CHIEF

Dr. Kergin has been an honorary chief of the Clifton tribe since a few days after his birth and Mrs. Kergin is an adopted daughter of Mrs. Ambrose Robbinson, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Clifton and as such is a granddaughter of the "bridal couple."

Rev. R. A. Burrows, chaplain of the Thomas Crosby IV, on behalf of the Mission Board of the United Church of Canada and also the church at Klemtu, the village which he said, still looks on Mrs. Clifton "as mother," presented Mrs. Clifton with an illuminated plate.

The fresh flowers, flown down from Prince Rupert, were speedily arranged in vases to flank the three-tiered wedding cake in front of Mr. and Mrs. Clifton.

At the head table, as the bridal couple cut the cake, were all the sons and daughters of the guests of honor but two. There were John Clifton, Mrs. Herbert Ridley, Edward Clifton, Mrs. Ambrose Robinson, Lewis Clifton, Mrs. William Robinson and Robert Clifton, former president of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia.

In front of the wedding cake, in a frame carved by the late Joseph Anderson, was the faded marriage certificate of Heber L. Clifton and Lucille Buckston, signed by the Rev. Thomas Crosby. It was witnessed, as far as one could see, by Nellie B. B. Bolton (wife of Dr. A. E. Bolton) and Mark Luther, and dated September 1, 1891.

Former member of the village council and an elder of Hartley Bay, Wilor Robinson gave an address in the Tsimpsean language.

TRIBUTE TO AID

Guy Williams, president of the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia, there with Mrs. Williams, paid tribute to the part Heber Clifton had paid in aiding the Indian cause.

He said that because of the marriage of the "beautiful young woman Lucy Clifton and the handsome, but probably wayward, young Heber Clifton in Port Simpson, by Rev. Thomas Crosby, the history of not only Hartley Bay but British Columbia Indians was moulded and shaped for a brighter future."

Mr. Williams traced the growth of Christianity on the coast from the time the various churches split the Natives so that some "went with the great Duncan (Father William Duncan) to New Metlakatla, Alaska, some stayed in Port Simpson and some came to Hartley Bay."

He said that when Heber Clifton and his family and friends returned to Hartley Bay there were only five houses and 27 people, including children. Today are 241 persons in the village, most of them Cliftons.

Mr. Williams said that following the demise of the British Columbia Allied Tribes in 1929, Mr. Clifton helped found the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia which had grown until it was the senior Indian organization in Canada.

"At a time when the white man has found ways and means of destroying the entire world by pressing a button at the wrong time, we need the stabilizing influence of the Cliftons," Mr. Williams said.

MOTHER TO TRIBE

He lauded Mrs. Clifton for having devoted her lifetime to "being a mother to the entire tribe at Hartley Bay."

Robert Clifton, Mr. Williams said, had carried on the family tradition and had helped strengthen the Native Brotherhood to make it what it is today.

"There was no prouder man than I, when Princess Margaret went to the hospital in Comox to visit Bob Clifton and later when Queen Elizabeth shook his hand," Mr. Williams said.

However, after extolling the virtues of the Clifton family, Mr. Williams warned the younger generation of the village "not to get the idea that just because you are a Clifton that you have a place in life waiting for you. You have to carve out your own place in life, so that you can carry the name of Clifton as proudly as your grandfather and grandmother."

On behalf of his father and mother Robert Clifton asked Mr. Sampson to extend his parents' appreciation for the flowers to assistant Indian Commissioner McGregor.

COLOR DOESN'T MATTER

"The gift makes us realize that color doesn't matter as long as people are friends," he said.

He also asked Mr. Ayres to extend his parents' thanks to Dr. and Mrs. Kergin for the roses.

He said that the flowers reminded his father of Dr. W. T. Kergin, who first treated the family and said that his mother and father believed that "if it wasn't for Dr. Kergin most of their children wouldn't be here today."

Before concluding the banquet by asking the blessing, Dr. Elliott praised Mr. and Mrs. Clifton for the example they had shown the village through their own efforts.

"Their lives have been well lived, well invested and well rewarded,"

Dr. Elliott said that Heber and Lucy Clifton had lived lives matching the words:

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

The festivities continued Tuesday night when all of Mr. Findlay's former pupils gave a party in honor of their onetime teacher-missionary, who hadn't paid a visit to the village in 15 years.

SUPERINTENDENT R. H. S. Sampson, of Skeena Indian agency presents bouquet of red carnations and gladioli to Mr. and Mrs. Heber Clifton. Other fresh flowers were sent by Dr. and Mrs. W. S. Kergin of Prince Rupert and were also obtained for their father and mother by the Clifton "boys".

SEVENTY-YEAR OLD marriage certificate and three-tiered wedding cake sit in front of Mr. and Mrs. Heber Clifton of Hartley Bay at beginning of banquet honoring couple on marriage which began September 1, 1891. Host of attractive girls acted as serviteurs for feast attended by more than 150 relatives and friends.

Oil probe slated in QCI this year

VANCOUVER (CP) — Alscope Explorations Limited of Vancouver will concentrate this year on development of its oil interests in the Queen Charlotte Islands and its natural gas lands in Saskatchewan.

Nicholas Martini, president of the company, made the announcement here Wednesday in the company's annual report.

The firm has abandoned all its uranium claims in northern Saskatchewan because of the loss of markets.

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by Byrne Hope Sanders

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END OF WINTER — BEGINNING OF SPRING — these are the weeks when we need to watch our health and our budgets, too. One of the best ways I know to have the nutrition you need and cut food costs is this: Instead of using the costly spread on your table, serve BLUE BONNET MARGARINE. You still have all the taste and nutrition because Blue Bonnet is an all-vegetable margarine — deliciously nutritious. You'll find, too, that it makes the lightest, flakiest pastry and the tenderest cakes. Try it! Blue Bonnet is economical, nutritious and makes just about everything taste better!

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